

November 2, 2018

The Honourable Keith Colwell  
Minister, Fisheries and Aquaculture  
P.O. Box 2223  
Halifax, NS  
B3J 3C4

sent via e-mail: MINDFA@novascotia.ca

Dear Minister Colwell:

We wish to update you on another recently published study that examined the far-field impacts of the Spectacle Island fish farm (lease # 0835) in the Port Mouton Bay ecosystem, this time on eelgrass habitat. As you may know, DFO has designated eelgrass an Ecologically Significant Species (ESS) because of its crucial role in providing essential habitat for numerous species and other key ecological services, including nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration, and reduction of wave action. When compared to eelgrass habitat in Port Joli or seven other eelgrass sites along Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast without fish farms, the results of this study indicated eelgrass habitat in the vicinity of the fish farm had been impacted by nutrient and organic loading from the fish farm. The study recommends the implementation of several monitoring measures and a minimum setback of 1000m between eelgrass beds and netpen fish farms in order to ensure the conservation and protection of this ecologically sensitive species.

In light of the previous studies we have shared with you and now these most recent results, we are once again requesting that you permanently retire the Spectacle Island lease site. Fish farming at that site has repeatedly been shown to have negative near- and far-field effects on water quality, benthic habitat, lobster catches and now eelgrass habitat.

In our last correspondence to you and your staff (dated July 25, 2018), we indicated our willingness to meet with you and your staff to discuss this research. Once again, we wish to reiterate this offer. We would also appreciate an update on the studies undertaken by your Department to evaluate the carrying capacity for fish farming at the Spectacle Island site..

Sincerely,  
Friends of Port Mouton Bay Directors

E. Brian Fisher          Ruth E. Smith

Janet H. Muttart          Robert L. Swim

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Attachments: Cullain N, McIver R, Schmidt AL, Milewski I, and Lotze HK. 2018. Potential impacts of finfish aquaculture on eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) beds and possible monitoring metrics for management: a case study in Atlantic Canada. *PeerJ* 6:e5630;DOI10.7717/peerj.5630.